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S E C R E T DUBLIN 001087

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KTFN](#) [ASEC](#) [KHLS](#) [PINR](#)

SUBJECT: IRISH IMAM VOWS TO ARREST EXTREMISTS, BUT WILL HE?

REF: DUBLIN 172

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF MARY DALY, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B), (D)

1. (C) Summary. Sheikh Hussein Halawa, the most prominent Muslim in Ireland, said in an August 29 interview with the Irish Times that he would personally arrest or report extremists to the Irish authorities. He said that he did not know extremists that were operating in Ireland, but would repudiate their views if he encountered them. This bold announcement is welcome from such a renowned Muslim, but is met with skepticism by emboffs who see this more as ploy to gain Irish trust than as serious engagement in the fight against terrorism. End Summary.

2. (U) In a public interview reported by the Irish Times on August 29, Sheikh Hussein Mohammed Halawa, Imam of the Islamic Cultural Center of Ireland (ICCI), pledged through a translator to personally arrest or report al-Qaeda supporters and Islamic extremists to Irish authorities. In the interview, Halawa stated that he had no knowledge of such sympathizers in Ireland, and that such individuals would not come to his mosque. He said, "I can't tell what's in people's brains, but I can say that I don't know anybody who might be attached to al-Qaeda." He further stated that the London bombings were "anti-Islamic," and that he would be willing to report a supporter of such bombings to the authorities. He also said that he would challenge the views of extremists, but has not had to do this, yet.

3. (U) The article relayed that Halawa's comments were prompted by reports that the 7/7 London bombings were perpetrated by radicalized young Islamic men living and working in Britain, and a video shown on Arab television that claimed that al-Qaeda members from Ireland took part in downing a U.S. helicopter that killed 16 troops in Afghanistan. Halawa said that he believed the extent of al-Qaeda's influence is magnified by the media.

4. (U) Halawa, a dual Irish/Egyptian national, is the most prominent Muslim cleric in Ireland. ICCI is a Sunni mosque co-located with the European Institute for Humanities and the European Council for Fatwa and Research. ICCI and Halawa present the image of Islam to the Irish, and have hosted events for a wide array of dignitaries and guests, including both the current and former presidents of Ireland, the Irish Prime Minister, other Irish politicians, numerous speakers on Islam, and British MP George Galloway (of the UN Oil for Food controversy). Halawa was invited to read from the Koran at the November 2004 Irish presidential inauguration.

5. (C) ICCI also has the nation's largest Muslim primary/secondary school in Ireland on its campus and receives education funding from the GOI. The building of ICCI was financed ten years ago and is still maintained by funds from the Sheikh Hamdan family and the Maktoum Foundation of Dubai. Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum of Dubai personally attended the groundbreaking ceremony in 1996. In an interview with emboff, Halawa said that he was hired by the Hamdan family because he had visited Ireland from Egypt often as a lecturer. He has also traveled to the United States.

6. (S/NF) Comment. Post welcomes Halawa's public statement condemning the 7/7 attacks and terrorism in general, but remains unconvinced that Halawa will take strong steps to fight extremism. Despite Halawa's statement, and the center's reputation as a moderate mosque in Dublin, we retain some suspicions about his activities and can confirm that there are known extremists that frequent ICCI:
--The head of ICCI's European Council for Fatwa and Research is Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, banned from entry into the United States since 1999.
--A Moroccan poloff told U.S. emboff that the GOM requested that he not attend ICCI for religious services as it is too radical.
--SIMO colleagues link two of the senior staff at ICCI to Islamic extremists in Ireland.
--At least one member of ICCI is reported to have gone on jihad to Iraq as a suicide bomber. End Comment.
KENNY